



## Is the hepatitis B vaccine safe?

Hepatitis B vaccine is very safe. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site or slight fever. Serious side effects are rare.

**Start protecting your baby at birth with the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine.**



## Where can I get more information?

- ❖ Your Health Care Provider
- ❖ New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Preventable Disease Program  
609-826-4861  
<http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/vpdp.shtml>
- ❖ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/index.htm>
- ❖ Immunization Action Coalition (IAC)  
<http://www.immunize.org/>

Please consult with your health care provider for your specific needs. This brochure is not a substitute for medical advice.

Special thanks to the Washington State Department of Health for permission to modify this brochure.



Start protecting your baby at birth with

# hepatitis B vaccine



## What is hepatitis B disease?

Hepatitis B disease is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. It can lead to severe illness, liver cancer and, in some cases, death.

Many people who get hepatitis B do not look or feel sick. Others may have a loss of appetite, stomach pain, extreme tiredness or yellowing of the skin or eyes.

## How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluids infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is susceptible. People can become infected with the virus through:

- ❖ Birth (spread from an infected mother to her baby during birth)
- ❖ Sex with an infected partner
- ❖ Sharing items such as razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, needles and syringes, and glucose meters with an infected person
- ❖ Direct contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- ❖ Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments

Hepatitis B virus is **NOT** spread by sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing.



## Why should pregnant women be concerned about hepatitis B?

A mother with hepatitis B can spread the disease to her newborn. Babies are less able to fight hepatitis B infection than older children or adults. If a baby is infected, there is a 90% chance he or she will develop chronic hepatitis B, the most serious form of the disease.

Chronic hepatitis B can eventually lead to serious health problems, including liver damage, liver cancer, and even death.

## How could my baby come in contact with the hepatitis B virus?

In many cases, the hepatitis B virus passes from mother to baby during birth when the mother does not know she is infected. In other cases, the virus is spread to the baby from an infected family member, caregiver, or friend. Most people who are infected with hepatitis B do not feel sick and have no idea they carry this virus.

**You and your baby are at higher risk for hepatitis B infection if you, your parents or someone you live with was born in:**

**Africa  
Alaska  
Eastern Europe  
Middle East**

**South America  
South Asia  
Western Pacific**



## What can I do to protect my baby?

Get your baby vaccinated within 24 hours of birth! The hepatitis B vaccine is given as 3 or 4 shots. After the first shot is given in the hospital, the next shot is usually given at 1-2 months of age. The last shot is given between 6 months and 18 months of age. Ask your doctor when your baby needs to come back for the next shot in the series.

Infants born to mothers with hepatitis B infection will need to receive the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine **AND** the hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) shot within 12 hours of birth.

